

TEXAS  
GOVERNMENT  
**2016**  
AGENCY WEBSITE  
CLARITY  
**INDEX**



**VisibleThread**<sup>™</sup>  
Clarity Index

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## The VisibleThread Clarity Index, Texas Government – 2016

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### Executive Summary

The [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#) requires federal agencies use writing that is clear, concise, well-organized and appropriate to the intended audience. The legislation does not require state-level agencies to comply, but administrators should consider adopting its principles. Plain language benefits the government agencies, too. Well-crafted communication helps agencies increase revenues and avoid unnecessary costs. For example, the state of Washington Department of Revenue agency estimates it collected \$800k in extra revenue after rewriting one tax collection letter. While the benefits of clear writing are well understood, some agencies communicate better than others. The purpose of this paper is to explore how well agencies for the State of Texas communicate through their websites.

The internet produced major efficiency gains for government at all levels. For agencies that serve large populations or geographies, like those in the State of Texas, the gains are even greater. But as more communication moves to the web, the need for clear communication increases. Citizens that encounter clear, concise and well-organized writing on agency websites engage better. When citizens can understand communication, agencies enjoy increased trust and revenues. Greater clarity promotes efficiency and helps agencies avoid unnecessary costs.

VisibleThread has created an Index of 54 Texas Government agency websites based on clarity of written content. We measured up to 100 pages on each website, across these four dimensions:

- [Readability](#) – How readable is the content?
- [Passive Language](#) – Active Language communicates clearly. What proportion of sentences is passive?
- [Long Sentences](#) – What proportion of all sentences are too long?
- [Word Complexity Density](#) – Complex words make web pages hard to understand.

What did we find?

Analysis suggests copy on Texas agency websites needs improvement. Grade-level writing, style and complexity limit the potential to effectively communicate with the majority of the population. Fewer than 50 percent of Texas citizens have a high school diploma. Yet, average writing scores for copy on Texas agency websites are at college levels. A more detailed analysis appears below in this report.

## Key Findings

### Clear Language:

The following guideline definitions will help you understand the information we present in the Key Findings section:

- Readability – a score of 60 is ideal, approximately an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.
- Passive language – 4% or less is ideal.
- Long Sentences – 5% or less across all content is ideal.
- Complex language density – complex words/total words\*100

You can find detailed definitions of ranking criteria in the Methodology section.

### Overall Leaders

The [Sulphur River Basin Authority](#) (rank 1), the [Lottery Commission](#) and [Nueces River Authority](#) (tied for 2<sup>nd</sup>) topped the 2016 rankings. These three agencies scored higher across all categories used to compile the rankings, appearing in the top third of the index across all criteria. The [Municipal Retirement System](#) (rank 4) was the only agency we measured that achieved a target Readability Score.

- The Sulphur River Basin Authority scored first for complex language. Complex words appeared in some sites at nearly 5x the rate.
- The Lottery Commission also scored well in Readability (59), especially when compared to peer agencies. This website also ranked third for its low levels of bad language.
- The Nueces River Authority ranked high on the strength of its relatively low levels of long sentences and passive voice.
- No agencies achieved target levels for passive voice (4%) or long sentences (5%); however, the 6<sup>th</sup> ranked [Legislative Reference Library](#) was first for passive voice at 5%.

VisibleThread™ Clarity Index			Texas Government – Q1, 2016		Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
			Index	Score		Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
1	Sulphur River Basin Authority	<a href="http://www.sulphurr.org">http://www.sulphurr.org</a>	38	5	51	8	6%	7	12%	4	1.35	1	3838			
2	Lottery Commission	<a href="http://www.tlottery.org">http://www.tlottery.org</a>	100	5.25	59	2	6%	9	14%	7	1.60	3	50052			
2	Nueces River Authority	<a href="http://www.nueces-ra.org/">http://www.nueces-ra.org/</a>	100	5.25	54	5	5%	2	11%	2	2.12	12	9490			
4	Municipal Retirement System	<a href="http://www.tmsr.org/">http://www.tmsr.org/</a>	100	9	60	1	7%	13	10%	1	2.63	21	59624			
5	Supreme Court	<a href="http://www.txcourts.gov/supreme">http://www.txcourts.gov/supreme</a>	100	11.25	55	4	7%	14	15%	9	2.34	18	27685			

### Notable Mentions

- **Agencies that maintained Readability levels below college levels:** Only 16.6% of Texas agencies achieved Readability scores above 50. More than half of Texans don't even hold a high school diploma, so writing levels should be at 50 or above to be adequately serve the public interest. In addition to those in the Top 5 index rankings, the following agencies achieved high school level readability scores:
  - [Land Office General \(56\)](#)
  - [Lavaca-Navidad River Authority \(54\)](#)
  - [Lower Colorado River Authority \(53\)](#)
  - [Texas Department of Transportation \(50\)](#)

#### Room for Improvement:

The bottom five places in the rankings were occupied by the following agencies:

- [Law Examiners Board of Texas \(50<sup>th</sup>\)](http://www.ble.state.tx.us/)
- [Public Safety Department of Texas \(51<sup>st</sup>\)](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/)
- [Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation \(52<sup>nd</sup>\)](http://www.tdlr.texas.gov/)
- [Medical Board of the State of Texas \(53<sup>rd</sup>\)](http://www.tmb.state.tx.us)
- [Texas Skills Standards Board \(54<sup>th</sup>\)](http://www.tssb.org/)

VisibleThread™ Clarity Index			Texas Government – Q1, 2016			Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
			Index	Score	Rank		Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank			
50	Law Examiners Board of	<a href="http://www.ble.state.tx.us/">http://www.ble.state.tx.us/</a>	81	42.25	38	30	17%	52	29%	45	3.80	42	56905				
51	Public Safety Dept. of	<a href="http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/">http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/</a>	100	42.5	37	35	14%	49	26%	37	4.44	49	28440				
52	Licensing and Regulation Dept. of	<a href="http://www.tdlr.texas.gov/">http://www.tdlr.texas.gov/</a>	101	43.25	36	40	17%	53	32%	51	3.00	29	181684				
53	Medical Board	<a href="http://www.tmb.state.tx.us">http://www.tmb.state.tx.us</a>	100	47.25	33	45	19%	54	29%	46	3.86	44	52455				
54	Skill Standards Board	<a href="http://www.tssb.org/">http://www.tssb.org/</a>	100	48	24	54	15%	50	27%	40	4.38	48	20401				

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Websites operated by the bottom 5 agencies scored in the bottom half of the rankings across all categories.

Factors making these the worst performers were:

- Poor readability ratings: With an average score of 34, copy on these websites would be very difficult to read for any individual, even those with college educations.
- High proportion of long sentences: Long sentences (between 29% and 32% in this sample) make the task of reading more complex. For example, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation and ranked 51<sup>st</sup> in this category as a result of content like this:  
  

“Nonphysical changes such as an increase in the maximum allowable working pressure (Internal or External), increase in design temperature, or a reduction in minimum temperature of a pressure-retaining item shall be considered an alteration.”
- High levels of passive language – An average of 16% of all sentences contained passive language – 4x that of recommended levels. The formal tone of passive language is hard to read for people with lower-level reading skills.
- Readability and Passive Voice levels had the greatest impact on overall scores for this group of agencies.

The Medical Board of the State of Texas and Texas Skills Standards Board websites ranked last among all sites measured. With scores of 47.25 and 48 on the Index, the sites were significantly behind the next group of agencies in the rankings. Long-sentences were present at 5x the recommended rate. Use of passive voice was more than 4x of ideal levels. These factors, coupled with poor readability and complex language scores contributed to last place finish.

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**Takeaways:**

**1. Wide variability between best and worst performers**

Texas Government agency websites fall into five distinct categories: Top Performers, Leaders, Strengths and Weaknesses, Stragglers and those that should be considered for Complete Overhaul. Large gaps between consecutive rankings in the Index define categories.

- In this Index, there are three agencies in the Top Performers category. Each has a score of 5.25 or below.
- Leaders have scores between 9 and 15.25. A 3.75 point difference in Index scores separate the Leaders category and those in the Top Performers category.
- Agencies in the Strengths and Weaknesses have Index scores ranging between 18.25 and 28.75. Websites in this category often score high in one category and poorly in another. Teams in this category have a clear opportunity to improve communication by focusing in key areas.
- Websites with scores between 31.25 and 43.25 fall into the Stragglers category. Sites in this category trail their peers every category:
  - Straggle category sites have very poor readability – average score of 36
  - Passive voice levels are at nearly 3x recommended levels
  - Long sentences appear 35 percent more frequently than in the Strengths and Weaknesses set.
  - Complexity scores average 3.41 – 15 percent higher than the Strengths and Weaknesses category.
- Websites in the Complete Overhaul category scored at 47.25 or below, four points worse than sites at the bottom of the range in the Straggles category. When site quality is this poor, a complete rewrite of all website content is the most efficient path to improvement.

**2. Agencies can dramatically improve clarity by focusing on certain metrics**

Many agencies scored well in certain areas but stumbled on one or two metrics.

For instance, the Legislative Budget Board was tied for 10<sup>th</sup> ranking well for readability, passive voice usage and long sentences. Yet, the score for complexity (6.60) ranks 54<sup>th</sup>. The Board would see immediate improvement by auditing its content for complex words.

**3. Legal content can be clear**

Several high performing Texas Agencies are focused on legal issues. Despite a reputation for being a profession with obtuse language, it's clear that content dedicated to legal topics doesn't have to be presented in a complex manner.

**4. The majority of Texas Government websites are hard to read**

With the exception of a handful of sites, the majority of Texas citizens would struggle to read state government sites. Not a single site included in the Index met target levels for passive voice or long sentences. In fact, the best site in the Index was still at 2x recommended levels for long sentences. The average score across the entire Index was more than 4x of ideal levels.



## Detailed Results Tables

We show the full detailed tables below.

We color-code, green to red, each score in the Index. Green indicates best, red indicates worst. Color-coding helps us to understand sites where one or two specific scores may be dragging down the overall ranking. Flagging specific areas (for instance, passive language) pinpoints areas for improvement.

VisibleThread <sup>™</sup> Clarity Index			Texas Government – Q1, 2016			Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
			Index	Score	Rank		Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank			
1	Sulphur River Basin Authority	<a href="http://www.sulphur.org">http://www.sulphur.org</a>	38	5	51	8	6%	7	12%	4	1.35	1	3838				
2	Lottery Commission	<a href="http://www.tlottery.org">http://www.tlottery.org</a>	100	5.25	59	2	6%	9	14%	7	1.60	3	50052				
2	Nueces River Authority	<a href="http://www.nueces-ra.org/">http://www.nueces-ra.org/</a>	100	5.25	54	5	5%	2	11%	2	2.12	12	3490				
4	Municipal Retirement System	<a href="http://www.tmsr.org/">http://www.tmsr.org/</a>	100	9	60	1	7%	13	10%	1	2.63	21	53624				
5	Supreme Court	<a href="http://www.txcourts.gov/supreme">http://www.txcourts.gov/supreme</a>	100	11.25	55	4	7%	14	15%	9	2.34	18	27685				
6	Legislative Reference Library	<a href="http://www.lrl.state.tx.us/">http://www.lrl.state.tx.us/</a>	100	12.25	40	27	5%	1	14%	8	2.13	13	67110				
7	Land Office General	<a href="http://www.glo.texas.gov">http://www.glo.texas.gov</a>	100	14	56	3	8%	18	18%	15	2.61	20	32865				
8	Law Library	<a href="http://www.sll.texas.gov">http://www.sll.texas.gov</a>	100	14.75	45	17	7%	11	17%	12	2.40	19	69099				
9	Judicial Council	<a href="http://www.txcourts.gov/tjo.aspx">http://www.txcourts.gov/tjo.aspx</a>	101	15.25	49	10	8%	16	16%	10	2.71	25	27277				
10	Legislative Budget Board	<a href="http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/">http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/</a>	100	18.25	49	10	5%	4	13%	5	6.60	54	16246				
10	Land Board Veterans	<a href="http://www.glo.texas.gov/vbl/">http://www.glo.texas.gov/vbl/</a>	100	18.25	48	13	8%	17	18%	13	3.04	30	32978				
12	Lower Colorado River Authority	<a href="http://www.lcra.org/">http://www.lcra.org/</a>	102	19.75	53	7	9%	28	19%	17	2.73	27	53115				
13	Juvenile Justice Dept.	<a href="http://www.tjjd.texas.gov">http://www.tjjd.texas.gov</a>	100	20	44	19	9%	24	20%	22	2.22	15	63020				
14	Transportation Dept. of	<a href="http://www.txdot.gov">http://www.txdot.gov</a>	100	20.25	50	9	9%	29	12%	3	3.57	40	23303				
14	Lavaca-Navidad River Authority	<a href="http://www.lnra.org/">http://www.lnra.org/</a>	30	20.25	54	5	14%	47	21%	25	1.62	4	8977				
14	Workforce Commission	<a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us/">http://www.twc.state.tx.us/</a>	100	20.25	37	35	5%	3	13%	6	3.42	37	57013				
17	Library and Archives Commission	<a href="http://www.tsl.texas.gov/">http://www.tsl.texas.gov/</a>	100	21	42	23	9%	24	25%	35	1.36	2	48198				
18	Real Estate Commission	<a href="http://www.trec.texas.gov">http://www.trec.texas.gov</a>	100	22.5	46	15	9%	21	17%	11	3.83	43	39724				
19	Upper Colorado River Authority	<a href="http://www.ucra.org/">http://www.ucra.org/</a>	16	23.5	40	27	10%	34	19%	19	2.18	14	2569				
20	Legislative Council	<a href="http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/">http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/</a>	92	23.75	41	25	10%	31	23%	30	1.97	9	34147				
21	Judicial Conduct Commission on	<a href="http://www.sccj.state.tx.us/">http://www.sccj.state.tx.us/</a>	21	24	35	42	7%	10	22%	28	2.29	16	11084				
22	North Plains Ground Water Conservation District	<a href="http://www.northplainsgcd.org">http://www.northplainsgcd.org</a>	100	24.5	44	19	10%	36	24%	32	2.03	11	26934				
23	Transportation Institute Texas	<a href="http://tti.tamu.edu">http://tti.tamu.edu</a>	100	25.25	33	45	7%	12	26%	38	1.76	6	41685				
24	Wildlife Services Texas (Formerly Wildlife Damage Management Service)	<a href="http://aglife.org/wildliveservices/">http://aglife.org/wildliveservices/</a>	100	26	43	22	11%	38	25%	36	1.87	8	23578				
25	Public Utility Commission	<a href="http://www.puc.texas.gov">http://www.puc.texas.gov</a>	101	26.5	42	23	9%	23	20%	21	3.56	39	20306				
26	Trinity River Authority	<a href="http://www.trinityra.org">http://www.trinityra.org</a>	100	26.75	39	29	13%	46	22%	27	1.66	5	17373				
27	Military Dept. (Formerly Adjutant General's Dept.)	<a href="http://www.tamf.us">http://www.tamf.us</a>	100	27.25	49	10	7%	15	30%	49	3.26	35	44036				
27	Sunset Advisory Commission	<a href="http://www.sunset.texas.gov/">http://www.sunset.texas.gov/</a>	100	27.25	33	45	6%	5	18%	14	3.89	45	23437				
27	Land Surveying Board of Professional	<a href="http://www.tsls.texas.gov">http://www.tsls.texas.gov</a>	100	27.25	48	13	8%	19	21%	24	6.47	53	26854				
30	State-Federal Relations Office of	<a href="http://www.osfr.state.tx.us">http://www.osfr.state.tx.us</a>	6	28.75	38	30	12%	39	19%	18	2.88	28	869				
31	Water Development Board	<a href="http://www.twdb.texas.gov/">http://www.twdb.texas.gov/</a>	100	31.25	37	35	9%	22	19%	16	6.32	52	43342				
32	Secretary of State	<a href="http://www.sos.state.tx.us/">http://www.sos.state.tx.us/</a>	100	32	27	53	9%	20	30%	48	1.83	7	79506				
33	Racing Commission	<a href="http://www.brc.texas.gov/">http://www.brc.texas.gov/</a>	100	32.25	45	17	13%	44	24%	34	3.17	34	65726				
34	Optometry Board	<a href="http://www.tob.state.tx.us">http://www.tob.state.tx.us</a>	88	32.5	37	35	12%	41	23%	31	2.64	23	72303				
34	Non-Anatomical Board	<a href="http://tsab.state.tx.us/">http://tsab.state.tx.us/</a>	15	32.5	41	25	13%	45	23%	29	3.05	31	5209				
34	Toxic Substances Coordinating Committee	<a href="http://www.tscc.state.tx.us/">http://www.tscc.state.tx.us/</a>	8	32.5	28	51	9%	30	26%	39	2.01	10	3386				
37	Sabine River Authority	<a href="http://www.sra.dst.tx.us/">http://www.sra.dst.tx.us/</a>	100	33	37	35	10%	32	28%	41	2.70	24	68207				
38	Senate	<a href="http://www.senate.state.tx.us/">http://www.senate.state.tx.us/</a>	100	33.75	38	30	9%	26	34%	53	2.71	26	34408				
39	Purchasing from People with Disabilities Council on	<a href="http://www.tcppd.state.tx.us/">http://www.tcppd.state.tx.us/</a>	10	34.5	33	45	6%	8	30%	47	3.50	38	1969				
40	San Jacinto River Authority	<a href="http://www.sjra.net/">http://www.sjra.net/</a>	100	35	46	15	12%	42	24%	33	4.63	50	26289				
41	Risk Management Office of	<a href="http://www.sorm.state.tx.us/">http://www.sorm.state.tx.us/</a>	100	35.25	29	50	6%	6	32%	52	3.10	33	176859				
42	Windham School District	<a href="http://www.windhamschooldistrict.org">http://www.windhamschooldistrict.org</a>	100	36.25	44	19	10%	33	28%	42	4.92	51	28859				
43	Railroad Commission	<a href="http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/">http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/</a>	100	36.5	35	42	11%	37	20%	20	4.04	47	13201				
43	Savings and Mortgage Lending & Dept. of	<a href="http://www.sml.texas.gov">http://www.sml.texas.gov</a>	53	36.5	34	44	10%	35	22%	26	3.72	41	16239				
45	Veterinary Medical Examiners Board of	<a href="http://www.tbvme.state.tx.us">http://www.tbvme.state.tx.us</a>	38	36.75	38	30	14%	48	20%	23	4.00	46	13288				
46	Public Utility Counsel Office of	<a href="http://www.opuc.texas.gov/">http://www.opuc.texas.gov/</a>	41	37.5	32	49	12%	40	23%	44	2.34	17	16860				
47	Rio Grande Regional Water Authority	<a href="http://www.rgrwa.org/">http://www.rgrwa.org/</a>	77	38	38	30	12%	43	23%	43	3.34	36	17061				
48	Soil and Water Conservation Board	<a href="http://www.tswcb.texas.gov/">http://www.tswcb.texas.gov/</a>	100	40	28	51	9%	27	31%	50	3.06	32	48632				
49	Securities Board	<a href="http://www.ssb.texas.gov/">http://www.ssb.texas.gov/</a>	100	41.75	36	40	15%	51	35%	54	2.64	22	68422				
50	Law Examiners Board of	<a href="http://www.lbe.state.tx.us/">http://www.lbe.state.tx.us/</a>	81	42.25	38	30	17%	52	23%	45	3.80	42	56905				
51	Public Safety Dept. of	<a href="http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/">http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/</a>	100	42.5	37	35	14%	49	26%	37	4.44	49	28440				
52	Licensing and Regulation Dept. of	<a href="http://www.tdlr.texas.gov/">http://www.tdlr.texas.gov/</a>	101	43.25	36	40	17%	53	32%	51	3.00	29	181684				
53	Medical Board	<a href="http://www.tmb.state.tx.us">http://www.tmb.state.tx.us</a>	100	47.25	33	45	19%	54	23%	46	3.86	44	52455				
54	Skill Standards Board	<a href="http://www.tssb.org/">http://www.tssb.org/</a>	100	48	24	54	15%	50	27%	40	4.38	48	20401				

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# The VisibleThread Clarity Index, Texas Government – 2016



The Rank Category chart shows how the Index divides agency websites by performance, relative to their peers.

VisibleThread <sup>TM</sup> Clarity Index		Texas Government – Q1, 2016		Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
		Num Pages	Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	
1	Sulphur River Basin Authority	38	5	51	8	6%	7	12%	4	13%	1	3838	Top Performers	
2	Lottery Commission	100	5.25	53	2	6%	9	14%	7	16%	3	50052		
3	Nueces River Authority	100	5.25	54	5	5%	2	11%	2	2.12	12	9490		
4	Municipal Retirement System	100	9	60	1	7%	13	10%	1	2.63	21	58624		
5	Supreme Court	100	11.25	55	4	7%	14	15%	9	2.34	18	27685	Leaders	
6	Legislative Reference Library	100	12.25	40	27	5%	1	14%	8	2.13	13	67110		
7	Land Office General	100	14	56	3	8%	18	18%	15	2.61	20	32865		
8	Law Library	100	14.75	45	17	7%	11	17%	12	2.40	19	69039		
9	Judicial Council	101	15.25	49	10	8%	16	16%	10	2.71	25	27277	Strengths & Weaknesses	
10	Legislative Budget Board	100	18.25	43	10	5%	4	13%	5	6.60	54	16246		
10	Land Board Veterans	100	18.25	48	13	8%	17	18%	13	3.04	30	32378		
12	Lower Colorado River Authority	102	15.75	53	7	9%	28	19%	17	2.73	27	59115		
13	Juvenile Justice Dept.	100	20	44	19	9%	24	20%	22	2.22	15	63020	Stragglers	
14	Transportation Dept. of	100	20.25	50	9	9%	29	12%	3	3.57	40	23303		
14	Lavaca-Nueces River Authority	30	20.25	54	5	14%	47	21%	25	1.62	4	8377		
14	Workforce Commission	100	20.25	37	35	5%	3	13%	6	3.42	37	57013		
17	Library and Archives Commission	100	21	42	23	9%	24	25%	35	1.36	2	48198	Complete Overhaul	
18	Real Estate Commission	100	22.5	46	15	9%	21	17%	11	3.83	43	39724		
19	Upper Colorado River Authority	16	23.5	40	27	10%	34	19%	19	2.18	14	2563		
20	Legislative Council	32	23.75	41	25	10%	31	23%	30	1.97	9	34147		
21	Judicial Conduct Commission on	21	24	35	42	7%	10	22%	28	2.29	16	11084	Stragglers	
22	North Plains Ground Water Conservation District	100	24.5	44	19	10%	36	24%	32	2.03	11	26334		
23	Transportation Institute Texas	100	25.25	33	45	7%	12	26%	38	1.76	6	41685		
24	Wildlife Services Texas (Formerly Wildlife Damage Management Service)	100	26	43	22	11%	38	25%	36	1.87	8	23578		
25	Public Utility Commission	101	26.5	42	23	9%	23	20%	21	3.56	39	20306	Complete Overhaul	
26	Trinity River Authority	100	26.75	39	29	13%	46	22%	27	1.66	5	17973		
27	Military Dept. (Formerly Adjutant Generals Dept.)	100	27.25	49	10	7%	15	30%	49	3.26	35	44036		
27	Sunset Advisory Commission	100	27.25	33	45	6%	5	18%	14	3.89	45	23437		
27	Land Surveying Board of Professional	100	27.25	48	13	8%	19	21%	24	6.47	53	26854	Stragglers	
30	State-Federal Relations Office of	6	28.75	38	30	12%	39	19%	18	2.88	28	869		
31	Water Development Board	100	31.25	37	35	9%	22	19%	16	6.32	52	43342		
32	Secretary of State	100	32	27	53	9%	20	30%	48	1.83	7	79506		
33	Racing Commission	100	32.25	45	17	13%	44	24%	34	3.17	34	65726	Stragglers	
34	Optometry Board	88	32.5	37	35	12%	41	23%	31	2.64	23	72303		
34	Non-Anatomical Board	15	32.5	41	25	13%	45	23%	29	3.05	31	5209		
34	Toxic Substances Coordinating Committee	8	32.5	28	51	9%	30	26%	39	2.01	10	3386		
37	Sabine River Authority	100	33	37	35	10%	32	28%	41	2.70	24	68207	Stragglers	
38	Senate	100	33.75	38	30	9%	26	34%	53	2.71	26	34408		
39	Purchasing from People with Disabilities Council on	10	34.5	33	45	6%	8	30%	47	3.50	38	1963		
40	San Jacinto River Authority	100	35	46	15	12%	42	24%	33	4.63	50	26289		
41	Risk Management Office of	100	35.25	29	50	6%	6	32%	52	3.10	33	178859	Stragglers	
42	Windham School District	100	36.25	44	19	10%	33	28%	42	4.92	51	28859		
43	Railroad Commission	100	36.5	35	42	11%	37	20%	20	4.04	47	13201		
43	Savings and Mortgage Lending A Dept. of	53	36.5	34	44	10%	35	22%	26	3.72	41	16293		
45	Veterinary Medical Examiners Board of	38	36.75	38	30	14%	48	20%	23	4.00	46	13288	Complete Overhaul	
46	Public Utility Counsel Office of	41	37.5	32	49	12%	40	23%	44	2.34	17	16860		
47	Rio Grande Regional Water Authority	77	38	38	30	12%	43	23%	43	3.34	36	17061		
48	Soil and Water Conservation Board	100	40	28	51	9%	27	31%	50	3.06	32	48632		
49	Securities Board	100	41.75	36	40	15%	51	35%	54	2.64	22	68422	Complete Overhaul	
50	Law Examiners Board of	61	42.25	38	30	17%	52	23%	45	3.80	42	56905		
51	Public Safety Dept. of	100	42.5	37	35	14%	49	26%	37	4.44	49	28440		
52	Licensing and Regulation Dept. of	101	43.25	36	40	17%	53	32%	51	3.00	29	181684		
53	Medical Board	100	47.25	33	45	19%	54	23%	46	3.86	44	52455	Complete Overhaul	
54	Skill Standards Board	100	48	24	54	15%	50	27%	40	4.38	48	20401		

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## Methodology – what are the metrics?

- We analyzed the sites on February 4, 2016.
- We scanned up to 100 pages of content using automated crawling techniques. In some cases, we found less than 100 pages, so we included the page count and word count for each agency.
- We crawled starting from the publically available URL.
- Certain pages within the sample of 100 contain non-textual content (e.g.: videos). We omitted these pages from our scan.

We calculated the index based on 4 metrics. Each metric contributes equally to the final score. The metrics are:

Metric	Formula
<b>1. Readability</b>	
Readability ranges from 1 to 100. 100 is the top mark. If communicating with citizens, aim for at least 50.  This is based on the <a href="#">Flesch Reading Ease</a> index.	$(206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{Average Sentence Length}) - (84.6 \times \text{Average Syllables per Word}))$
<b>2. Passive Language</b>	
The % rating is the proportion of sentences with a passive construction. Passive language is where the subject acted upon appears before the verb. For example:  "Quality is monitored" vs. "We monitor quality"  If you use active voice, you will increase clarity & strength. You will also flush out the 'actor', i.e. who did the action?	$(\text{Passive Sentences} / \text{Total Sentences} \times 100)$
<b>3. Long Sentences</b>	
The % rating is the proportion of sentences that are longer than 25 words. Long sentences mask multiple concepts. Splitting up these sentences will result in a clearer message.	$(\text{Long Sentences} / \text{Total Sentences} \times 100)$



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#### 4. Complex Word Density

The density rating is the proportion of complex words relative to the total word count. This scan looks for complex words/phrases based on Federal Guidelines. See <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/wordsuggestions/simplerwords.cfm> for the list scanned. Replacing complex words with simpler words helps your readers concentrate on your content.

(Complex Words/Total Words \* 100)

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### About VisibleThread

VisibleThread helps executives in large organizations govern content quality with less cost and risk. Sales and marketing teams in diverse industries use our technology to improve many functions, including proposal development, contract review and brand audits. Our software finds brand compliance, poor readability and other issues in websites and documents. Unlike consumer-grade analysis tools, VisibleThread processes hundreds of documents and web pages in minutes. Fuelled with greater organizational intelligence, customers drive efficiency and reduce cost across their organizations. For more information, visit [www.visiblethread.com](http://www.visiblethread.com)

**For questions or if you want a specific sector index:**

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  - For questions on the metrics or methodology, email: [support@visiblethread.com](mailto:support@visiblethread.com)
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